

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 29, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Continued Commitment to the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program

The Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program, named for its legislative sponsors, is a Federal initiative that generates employment and training for more than 34,000 people who are blind or who have other significant disabilities. These individuals, working in more than 600 nonprofit agencies associated with the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) or with NISH (a national nonprofit agency that serves persons with a wide range of disabilities), furnish supplies and services to the Federal Government under the JWOD Program.

In recent years, the JWOD Program has faced numerous challenges as the Federal acquisition system has evolved in ways not envisioned even a decade ago. Today, for example, hundreds of thousands of Federal employees buy goods with purchase cards. Electronic commerce is expanding rapidly and commercial firms deliver goods previously stocked and distributed by Federal agencies. These and other procurement reforms have created a more direct relationship between commercial vendors and their Federal customers. Participants in the JWOD Program are taking steps to adjust to these and other changes in the Federal procurement environment, but the transition is a dynamic and far-reaching process that requires strong support from Government customers.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, the unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is unacceptably high. We cannot afford to lose any opportunities for this segment of our population. I call upon you to recognize the contributions made to the Federal Government by individuals with disabilities under the JWOD Program and to take steps to ensure that your agencies' procurement executives, and other employees who acquire supplies for your agency, purchase JWOD products and services, consistent with existing law. Their support for the JWOD Program will help people with significant disabilities become and remain more independent and productive members of society. It is particularly important to encourage those entrusted with Federal purchase cards to be vigilant in continuing to purchase the reasonably priced products and services (including SKILCRAFT items) supplied through the JWOD Program. The JWOD Program also provides many recycled content, environmentally preferable, and energy efficient products. The purchase of these items would enable the Federal Government to continue its leadership of the "greening of the government" initiative while invigorating the JWOD Program.

Representatives of the Committee for Purchase From People Who are Blind or Severely Disabled (the Federal entity responsible for the JWOD Program), NIB, or NISH will contact your procurement staff in the near future to explore steps that your agency can take to increase support for the JWOD Program at this critical juncture.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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